

POINTS OF VIEW

Internet is a breeding ground for hate

The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies — an institute bringing anti-Semitism, bigotry, racial hatred and ethnic intolerance to the attention of government, the public and the media — recently arranged a press conference in Hamilton.



TAHIR ASLAM GORA

Leo Adler, director of national affairs of the centre, informed the audience about the growing menace of terrorism and hate on the Internet.

The centre launched its 10th annual interactive report, Digital Terrorism and Hate 2007, compiled by the centre's researchers in Los Angeles, Toronto, Jerusalem, Paris, New York and Buenos Aires.

"This report includes over 600 sites culled from almost 7,000 problematic websites, blogs, newsrooms, YouTube and other on-demand video sites, a spike of almost 17 per cent over 2006," Adler said, quoting the report's editor, Rabbi Abraham Cooper.

"Today, the Internet not only facilitates hate, violence and terrorism, its technological engines shape and even dictate tactics and trends deployed by groups committed to destroying our democratic values and multicultural societies. Terrorist organizations are using the Net to bypass parental control to directly recruit young people into their culture of death," Adler said.

The question arises: Is our government, and governments around the world, doing enough to combat digital

terrorism and hate? Some national governments are openly spreading hatred — the Iranian regime the worst of them.

The Canadian government seems determined to tackle hate propaganda but unfortunately cannot dig deep enough. A tiny number of Islamists are spreading hate in their ethnic language media outlets.

There is a lot of indirect hate as well. For instance, a well-known Islamic activist delivered an Eid sermon in a mosque north of Toronto last week and said Canada is a rapidly decaying society.

According to him, this is a society that has sunk to new lows and could be cured only by Islam.

Another mosque in Toronto warned Muslims not to greet fellow Canadians on the occasion of Thanksgiving. The mosque's website said: "How can we bring ourselves to congratulate or wish people well for their disobedi-

ence to Allah? Thus expressions such as: Happy Thanksgiving, happy birthday, Happy New Year, etc., are completely out."

These are the disturbing statements that eventually lead to a sense of alienation.

Concerned about similar ideologies, the New York City police department issued a report in August, Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat. This report is a kind of milestone in understanding the causes of radicalization in the West. These causes may eventually lead to home-grown terrorism.

Canadian law enforcement and intelligence agencies need to look at the report thoroughly.

The report says, "the Internet, certain Salafi-based NGO's (non-governmental organizations), extremist sermons /study groups, Salafi literature, jihadi videotapes, extremist-sponsored trips to radical madrassas

and militant training camps abroad have served as 'extremist incubators' for young, susceptible Muslims — especially ones living in diaspora communities in the West."

This report, particularly, states further: "The Internet provides the wandering mind of the conflicted young Muslim or potential convert with direct access to unfiltered radical and extremist ideology."

In this situation, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies has, in its own words, established itself as a leader in the field of social awareness and public education throughout Canada.

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City Kidz off and running nationally

Hamilton's goal to be the best city to raise a child, expands across Canada

BY TODD BENDER

This is not a story about a charity. This is a story about Hamilton.

When I first arrived in Hamilton in 1992, I understood that a herculean task was required to help the children of this city. Child poverty was a growing epidemic, which recent statistics continue to confirm: 24 per cent of the children under age 14 in this city live in poverty.

Although I knew that eradicating child poverty in Hamilton would be a vast team effort, I at least wanted to play my part and provide our "city kids" some hope. Hope for a better future, hope that comes through

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knowing that someone cares for them, and hope that despite their station in life, all children have opportunities and can be anything they want to be.

I am executive director of City Kidz, and our organization deals in hope every week. City Kidz is an inner-city, faith-based, children's organization that operates a number of weekly activities that aim to teach Hamilton youth positive attitudes and behaviours.

Not only do our more than 150 volunteers visit all of our kids at home during the week, but they also play a major role in our Saturday program, which sees 500 to 600 children come out to take part in interactive educational activities.

Quite simply, the purpose of our charity is to provide opportunities through outreach events to instil in these children a sense of personal

responsibility, respect for their community, a sense of wonder and fun, and to know that each and every one of them has worth and that someone cares for them. Our home visits and Saturday program are reinforced with other seasonal giveaways such as our "Bikes for Kidz" and the "Gift of Christmas." There are more than 1,100 children participating in various programs run by City Kidz.

Over the past 14 years, City Kidz has grown and now serves the entire downtown core of Hamilton, and even though we are not able to provide personal transportation to areas outside of the core, families from the Mountain, Stoney Creek and Dundas are hearing

about what's happening and finding their way to City Kidz. Our program is growing because to us, every kid is a "city kid" no matter where they are.

Our passion for our "kidz" and our rapid growth led us recently to announce that City Kidz will be transforming itself into a national charity. It is our hope that soon we will be able to help children in cities from coast to coast through branches established in all provinces and territories, ultimately reaching over 1,000,000 children.

To do this we need your help. By now, many in the community may have heard about the Road 2 Hope Marathon Weekend (Nov. 2-5). Over the course of this weekend, a number of running/walking events (1 km, 5 km, 10 km), including Hamilton's first full and half marathon in almost 20 years, will be held to raise funds for Hamilton's City Kidz and the Joy and



HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

Rev. Todd Bender, left, and Diane Vandenhoven, with children at opening of a City Kidz day-care centre in east Hamilton.

Hope of Haiti. The weekend will end with a Celebration Gala Dinner at Carmen's Banquet Centre featuring two-time Academy Award winner Michael Douglas as the keynote speaker.

But, you may ask: How do these events tie in with child poverty? The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction recently set a bold goal of "Making Hamilton the best place to raise a child." Clearly, there is now a concerted effort in Hamilton to invest in our children, provide them with the resources they need to be their best and ensure that the community understands that our children

truly are the future.

They are our future workforce, our future taxpayers, and our future community leaders. They are the seeds that will bear fruit years down the road if only this community gives them the attention they so richly deserve.

Through this November weekend, we have a chance to raise the funds needed to help some of the neediest in our city, create the programs to help chart futures and truly make Hamilton the best place to raise a child.

It has been said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

On behalf of the Road 2 Hope organizing committee, I invite all of Hamilton to take that step with us. Help a "city kid" by walking or running in any of the races, be a sponsor, give a pledge or simply volunteer your time to what promises to be Hamilton's biggest event of the year.

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For more information on the event or City Kidz please visit: www.citykidz.ca.

Rev. Todd Bender is the founder and executive director of Hamilton's City Kidz.

PM's trick is to shift national gaze to Dion

OTTAWA ♦ Clever as ever, the prime minister is rephrasing the big political question: Once about Stephen Harper and trust, it's now about Stéphane Dion and competence.

A beleaguered Liberal leader only made it easier to answer yesterday by choosing temporary self-preservation instead of a risky election fought on principles. His tortured reluctance to topple the Conservative minority over a throne speech crafted to offend his sensibilities buys time. But it does little to inspire confidence in Dion's fitness to lead or repair the fissures in a party that once prided itself on being the western world's most successful.

Much as he did in bungling Quebec byelections, Dion allowed Liberals to be boxed in by the throne speech. As the prime minister made clear yesterday, Conservatives will spend the coming weeks nailing down the lid, beginning with a confidence vote on omnibus crime legislation.

Liberals helped make their current mess possible. In overlooking more accomplished candidates in choosing a leader with suspect strategic skills



JAMES TRAVERS

and weak caucus support, convention delegates set in motion the events now unfolding here.

All of this makes capital theatre even if elsewhere the brinkmanship is watched, if at all, with disbelief. But what's largely missed in witnessing Harper play politics so adroitly — doubters need only consider the artful pre-throne speech orchestration of an unusual press conference, an equalization deal with Nova Scotia and the appointment of John Manley's Afghanistan panel — is how much this prime minister is changing the Canadian brand.

In 4,000 words and 40 minutes

Tuesday night, Harper described a country many of its citizens would struggle to recognize. That Canada breaks its international treaty commitment to fight climate change, fuels unfounded fears to advance a law-and-order agenda and effectively commits to extending a polarizing Afghanistan mission months before Parliament will consider the options.

Subtler if equally worthy of citizen attention is what the prime minister has in mind for the federation. With a policy mix reflecting his concerns for provincial rights and market efficiency, Harper is simultaneously proposing to loosen and tighten central control.

Generally appealing to Conservatives and an affront to Liberals, Harper's recreation of Canada more in the image of its North American neighbour than its traditional European soulmates demands thorough and thoughtful deconstruction. Normally that work would either fall to the official Opposition, mostly on Parliament Hill or in an election. But these times are far from normal.

A suspect leader and a party so unprepared for a campaign that it genuflects to calculated humiliations is poorly positioned to expose the fault lines in government policies or proleptize credible alternatives. Dion's escape, one he tested yesterday, is to first bring the question back to Harper's designs on Canada and then offer the country a choice.

That won't be easy. His vision isn't clear, Liberals are infected with the opposition dissent virus and are

now the common target for their collective rivals. Rarely does it get worse in the blood sport played here with such relish. Conservatives are vulnerable on the environment, Afghanistan and for an authoritarian core character that unsettles voters whenever it surfaces. But those are mere asterisks as long as the country is questioning about the Liberal leader, not the Conservative prime minister.

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